

A  
LETTER  
OF THE  
R. F. PETER FRANCIS  
Le COURAYER,  
Doctor of Divinity of the  
University of OXFORD,  
and CANON Regular of the Ab-  
bey of *St. Genevieve* at PARIS,  
To H. E. CARDINAL de  
NOAILLES,  
Archbishop of PARIS.

*Occasioned by his Pastoral Instruction of the  
31. of October, 1727.*

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L O N D O N :

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3<sup>rd</sup> Dec



## ADVERTISEMENT.

THE *Pastoral Instruction* \*, which is lately come out under the Name of Cardinal de Noailles, concerning my *Dissertations on the Validity of the Ordinations of the Church of England*, does not permit me to be silent. If the Divines of his Eminence had only oppos'd and censur'd me, without bringing me against my Will into their Injustice, I might have been silent; and being contented to have no Hand in the Iniquity, I should have thought I might have dispensed my self from complaining of a Judgment, against which those Works were sufficiently supported by themselves. Such was my Behaviour towards some other Bishops of France, against whose Vexations I was contented

\* Though it be dated in October, yet it did not come out till the End of December.



to make a Protestation, staying to do my self Justice in due time.

But since it was thought proper to add another Injustice to the first, by attempting to make the Publick believe that I acquiesced to a Condemnation, which I always rejected, because I always took it to be unjust ; I thought my self obliged to write to H. E. Cardinal de Noailles, to disown a *Submission*, which Uprightness makes me look upon as a Weakness, and to publish that Denial in order to undeceive the Publick, and clear myself from a Baseness, of which I might have been justly thought to be guilty by my Silence.

It would have been natural, in order to make every Body more sensible how I have been impos'd upon, to annex to this Letter that which is mentioned in the *Instruction* of H. E. But because I design to publish in a short time an Account of what has happened in that Affair, with the Original Letters relating to that Matter, it appeared to me more proper to put off till that time the Publication of that Letter ; and I thought it was now sufficient for me, out of a due Regard to Uprightness and Truth, to disown my pretended acquiescing to a  
Judgment



Judgment given out of Weakness, and against all the Rules of Equity.

But at the same time that I am forc'd to disown the Errors that have been imputed to me so unjustly, and also my pretended Conversion, I think my self obliged to renew the Protestations I have frequently made, of a steady and constant Adherence to Unity and the Church, and of a sincere Submission to those Truths that are truly Catholick, which ought by no Means to be confounded with that multitude of Scholastick Opinions and abstracted Disputes, of which new Doctrines are daily coined, more proper to multiply Heresies and keep up Division, than to reunite us in the Profession of the same Faith, whose whole Merit and Character, according to St. Hilary, consists in its Simplicity. *In Simplicitate fides est. . . . Non per difficiles nos quaestiones ad beatam vitam vocat Deus.*

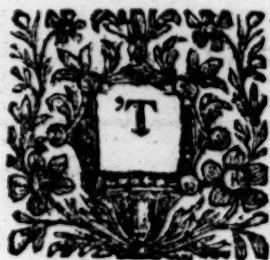
Hilar. *De Trinit. Lib. 10. Num. 70. p. 1080.*  
*Ed. Bened.*





*A Letter to his Eminence.*

My LORD,



IS a great Comfort to me to see by the Publication of your Instruction, that Y. E. approves the Declarations I had the Honour to make to you, and that you do Justice to the Purity of my Faith. Besides, I cannot sufficiently express to you my Acknowledgement for the Moderation with which you have been willing that my Affair should be managed, without indulging the Passion, which the secret Authors of the Conspiracy formed to undo me, have brought into the Censures of most of the Bishops.

But

But at the same time, my Lord, that I cannot but commend the Goodness of Y. E. 'tis a sad thing for me to see that your Name and Confidence should be so far abused, as to ascribe to me Errors which I have always disowned, to suppose in me a Repentance, for which the Purity of my Sentiments never gave an occasion, and to leave out of the Letter of the 3d of *December*, 1727, which I had the honour to write to you, whatever might have serv'd for my Justification, in order to make the Publick believe that I subscribe to the Condemnation of my Work, though I am more persuaded than ever, that I have advanced nothing in it, but what is True, Orthodox, and agreeable to the soundest Theology, and all Antiquity.

I ought, my Lord, for my own sake, and for the sake of the Publick, to disown a pretended Submission, more disgraceful to me, than all the imaginary Heresies, which they seek out in my Writings without finding them ; and I should think my self to be wanting to what my Innocence and Truth require, if after having complained to the Bishops assembled at *Paris*, and to the Bishop of *Marseilles*, of the Calumnies which they



laid to my Charge unjustly, I had the Weakness to acknowledge in my Works the Errors, which your Divines have been pleas'd to impute to me without Justice and Equity.

Whilst I was only attacked by such Writers, as most of those whom I had occasion to oppose, and by Bishops whose Reputation dispensed me from taking Notice of their Judgments, I was not troubled for their denying me their Approbation, and I was as much unconcerned for their Censures as for their Praises. But it is no longer proper for me to be silent: Your Name, my Lord, your Piety, the Eminence of your See and Dignity, and the Reputation of your Equity, would prepossess the World against my Innocence: That prepossession would be increased by my silence; and a respect arising from a deference to a Judgment that bears your Name, would make me an Accomplice of the Iniquity with which I am oppress'd.

Give me leave therefore, my Lord, to apply my self directly to Y. E. in order to inform you of my dispositions and sentiments. Having been hitherto deceiv'd by those who pretended to use their Interests with you in my Favour, I ought  
no

no longer to employ any other Interpreter but my self to explain my Thoughts, and I beseech you reciprocally to depend only upon your self for the Justice of my Complaints, and the Purity of my Sentiments.

I am charg'd, my Lord, with Errors about the Sacrifice, the real Presence, the Sacerdotal Office, the Form and the Character of the Sacraments, Ecclesiastical Ceremonies, the Jurisdiction and Authority of the Church, and the Pope's Supremacy. And to give some Colour to those Accusations, all Artifices have been used, sometimes by curtailing my Propositions, sometimes by drawing from them the most indirect Consequences, sometimes by leaving out of my Works whatever might serve to justify them, lastly sometimes by imputing to me as a Crime some free Expressions frequently used by Writers of great Reputation and of a known Catholicism.

To clear my self from so many false Imputations, I have had the honour to declare to Y. E. that upon all those Heads, I never had any other Opinion but that of the Catholick Church. And yet, my Lord, without any regard to such a plain and sincere Declaration,  
they

they will have it, that Y. E. has reclaimed me from my Errors, and that I have renounced them.

If I disown this, it is not, my Lord, to deprive you of the Glory of my Conversion. I shall always think it an Honour to be very much indebted to your Eminence. But either I need no Conversion, or it is still to be made; for I think, as I always did, about those matters that are the Subject of your Instruction; and if I am not in an Error, as Y. E. believes, 'tis because I never was.

And indeed I am fully persuaded and always believ'd, as I had already the Honour to declare to Y. E. and to explain my self about it in publick Writings \*, that *Jesus Christ* is really present in the Sacrifice of the Eucharist; that *not*

*only this Sacrifice is never*  
 \* *Lett. to H. without his Presence, but*  
*E. and to M. also that in Consequence*  
*Girardin. of the Laws of its In-*

*stitution, one of them can*  
*never be separated from the other; and that*  
*if Christ were not truly present in the Ob-*  
*lation of the Eucharist, it would be no lon-*  
*ger the Sacrifice which he instituted. Ne-*  
 vertheless I am more convinc'd than  
 ever



ever that the Notion of Sacrifice in the Eucharist does not so much arise from the Presence of Christ, as from the representation and Offering of his Death. This is all that I have asserted in my Works ; and to attack me, as your Divines, my Lord, have done, by supposing that I separate the Sacrifice from the Presence, is to forge Phantoms in order to fight them, and only to shew to knowing Men, that far from confuting me, they never understood the true State of the Question.

'Tis therefore only to make a shew of an Erudition foreign to the Purpose and to impose upon ignorant People, that we are amus'd and tired with a display of a long and insignificant Tradition, to prove what no body disputes, nor does every thing prove it, as I shall make it appear in time ; witness the passages in *St. Ignatius*, *St. Irenæus*, *St. Cyprian* and many others, the Sense whereof is wrested to find what never was in them. But what signifies it? They impose upon the People, under Pretence of Testimonies which no body examines, and which most of them don't understand; and this is the only thing they have in view. For certainly Tradition was never alleg'd  
more

more improperly to determine a Question so metaphysical as ours is, and which never was a Subject of discussion in Antiquity.

It were needless, my Lord, to explain my self again upon the Article of the real Presence. Y. E. declares that you don't suspect me, to have said any thing against it \*. \* Inst. p. 76. But I know not why my Doctrine about the Sacerdotal Office is more suspected by your Divines, since I have acknowledged that the Oblation of the Christian Sacrifice is the principal Function of it, and that it was in the Institution of the Eucharist that the Apostles, and their Successors in their Persons, receiv'd the Power of offering it. Is there, my Lord, upon this Head any other Doctrine to be believ'd ? For if this is the only one, I am sure, I have not alter'd it in any part of my Works.

Nor have I more departed from the common Doctrine of the Church, about the Form and the Character of the Sacraments ; I acknowledge every where that all of them have their Matter and Form, and that some imprint a Character.

But

But I durst not affirm wherein consists the Form of those which have none determined by the Scripture, or by the perpetual and uniform Practice of the Churches. And this I have called an Abuse, and a Rashness, in those private Persons who should undertake to decide it. If this be a Heresy, my Lord, it is not so much a Heresy of my own, as of all the wise and knowing Divines, who being offended at the boldness of the School-men in affirming what they know not, what they can't know, and the Decision of which is ever needless, are cautious in this matter, and prescribe to themselves upon this Head no other Rule, but to follow exactly the Practice of the Churches in which they live. This is the Heresy of the learned *Morinus*, who reflected still more than I have done, upon the Temerity of the Schoolmen in deciding peremptorily those Things about which they were perfectly ignorant. And if the Council of *Trent* seemed sometimes to give some weight to their Decisions upon this Head, one ought to judge of the Sense of the Canons of that Council, not so much by the first Sense which their Expressions offer, as by their declaring that they would not set up for



a Doctrine what was freely debated among Divines, and by the Uniformity or Variety of the Practice of the Church.

What I have said, my Lord, about the Form of the Sacraments, must also be said by me about the Character. I have acknowledged it in all those Sacraments in which it is acknowledged by the Church. But how fairly can I be accused of designing to destroy it, for saying only that we understand better what a Character is by its Effect, which is to prevent a Reiteration, than by its very Name, to which Divines annex so many different and obscure Ideas, that it were as well for them to annex none at all to it. Indeed 'tis a strange multiplying of Heresies, to set them at such a low rate. And if it be so, which of your Divines, my Lord, could justify his Catholicism?

As for the Question about the Reiteration of the Sacraments, I am neither the first nor the only one, who looked upon it as a Question of Discipline. Nay, I don't apprehend, that a Practical Ceremony can be any thing else. But does this import that I have a mind to revive  
that

that Dispute agitated between great Saints with a Heat, it did not appear to deserve? Your Divines, my Lord, would make others believe it, that they might have a right to Censure me; but they impose upon me: for I have always thought it my Duty to conform to the Rites and Usages Authoritised in the Church, and no one did ever submit to them more religiously.

'Tis therefore a wrong Accusation to say, that I have not spoken of the Ceremonies of the Church with a due Respect. I have said in some places, that they were commendable, and that they ought to be faithfully observ'd. But could I not intimate without contempt, that their Number was excessive, and that we were overburthen'd with them, and wish after some great Men, that a nearer approach should be made to the Primitive Simplicity?

St. *Austin* did so in his Time, and complained already of the Introduction of a new Judaism by that amazing Multiplication of Observances and Ceremonies. I did not go so far, my Lord, and my respect for the Church made me lay aside some Complaints, which Zeal would justify in a more Happy Time.

It

It was not with a Design to weaken the Authority of the Church, that I have shewn how far the Emperors and Kings did formerly intermeddle with Ecclesiastical Affairs, and use their Power in relation to them : No one was ever more unwilling than I am, to confine her Jurisdiction, or to transfer it to Princes. This is a new Calumny of your Divines, my Lord, of which I am forc'd to complain to you. On the contrary, I have only justified the Church of England, by shewing that Bishops have preserved in that Church, as well as amongst us, a right of making Regulations in Point of Discipline, and that they only, even exclusively of Princes, have a Power to use Censures in order to procure Obedience to their Laws. With what Equity therefore could they lay the contrary to my Charge ? Should I, to comply with their Prejudices, have ascrib'd to that Church an exorbitance which she disowns, and never Authorised ? Or by what a strange Sort of Zeal must I condemn whatever does not agree with our Usages and Manners ? No, my Lord, Orthodoxy does not require it, and Equity did not allow me to do so. One ought to do Justice to every Body ; and notwithstanding the  
 Authority



Authority of the late Bishop *Bossuet*, who was well acquainted with the Principles of the Catholick Church, but does not appear to have well known the particulars of the Reformation of *England*; one cannot deny that Church the Justice to acknowledge, that after the irregular motions of the first heat of the Revolutions, she did as nicely distinguish the Limits of the two Powers, as the *Gallican* Church herself.

What remains, my Lord, is to explain my self about the Pope's Supremacy. I acknowledge it in the Sense of the Gallican Church, and such as the late Bishop *Bossuet* desired it in his *Exposition*, and I condemn those who deny it in that Sense. But as to the exercise of the Jurisdiction of the Popes, as it varied according to the times and places, it would be an Error to maintain that most of the Functions they exercise are exercised by them, *Jure Divino*; and nothing can be more exact than the Words that are censured, and which affirm that those Functions were devolved to them in *England*, only because a long *Prescription*, the *Example of the other Western Churches*, and the *Fruits of their*

B                      . *Apostleship*

*Tom. 2. Part*      *Apostleship had occasioned*  
                          *their been reserved to them.*  
 2. P. 63.      And indeed, your Divines

my Lord, have not been able to find upon this Head any ground for a Condemnation, but by supposing with as little Equity as Knowledge, that I meant in that place the Pope's Supremacy. But there never was a Calumny so ill grounded, and the very Words that are censured, will not bear this Sense.

These are, my Lord, my true Sentiments about the different Heads, which make the subject of your Instruction. I protest before God to Y. E. that I never had any other Sentiments; and I flatter my self that whoever reads my Books without prepossession will find in them nothing contrary to the account, I have just now given you of my Opinions. How then, since I am and have always been free from all the Errors which they pretended to Censure, could they ascribe to me a Retraction of those Errors, and a return to the Doctrine of the Church, from which I never departed, and which I never weakened in any part of my Works?

On

On the contrary, 'tis in Consequence of my Adhering to that Doctrine, that by constantly refusing to subscribe to the Judgment Y. E. has given about my Works, I readily declar'd that I acquiesced to the Catholick Doctrines set forth in your Instruction, to the Condemnation of the Errors contrary to them, and to the disowning the Expressions that should favour those Errors.

But by declaring to Y. E. that I acquiesced to the Catholick Doctrine of your Instruction, you know that I always persisted to maintain that I had never writ against it ; that in condemning the Errors contrary to it, I protested that I had neither followed, nor taught them in my Works, and that I looked upon their being imputed to me in the Instruction, as an Injustice ; that in disowning the Expressions that might seem to favour those Errors, it was only in a disposition to condemn what might be wrongly used in Favour of Error, against my Intention and Knowledge ; lastly that in saying that I was sorry for the Offence occasioned by my Books, I did not mean an Offence given, but an Offence taken.

B 2

After



After these Protestations so often repeated, and the proofs of which that are in my hands, your Instruction, my Lord, will force me to publish how comes it that your Divines have traduced me, as a Writer, who acknowledged and retracted his errors, who acquiesced to his condemnation, who submitted to the censure of his Works, and repaired by an humble confession of his fault the Offence he had given to the Church?

Submission, my Lord, is a great Virtue, and Humility the ground of all Virtues. But they ought to be founded upon Truth, without which docility is nothing but Weakness, and Humility nothing but Baseness.

I shall never be ashamed to retract any Errors, that shall escape me. But you would not, my Lord, make an ill use of your Authority to extort from me a Confession inconsistent with the Testimony I ought to give of my Innocence; and I know too well the Authors of my Oppression, to lay upon you the Violence which forces me to forsake my Repose, my Country and my Profession. Nothing could have been more grievous to me than the sad Necessity to which I am reduced

reduced to give this sort of scandal to the Publick. I have resisted a long time even at the Hazard of my Liberty : I have done all that I could to avoid it. Nay I would have done still, more had not your Instruction, my Lord, forced me to break Silence : and by Adherence to the Catholick Church in a Foreign Land will convince all Europe, that nothing but the reason of a just defence, and the necessity of freeing my self from an unjust Vexation, could force me to make a Step so contrary to my Inclinations.

Being always ready to resume my former Condition, as soon as I have a reasonable Assurance that there is no longer any design of undoing me, and that I shall be at full Liberty to go about my Justification, I shall be the first in longing for a State which I leave with the greatest Uneasiness. I shall carry every where a Love of Unity, a Fondness for my Profession, and a respect for those very persons, who condemn me unjustly.

Being free enough, to own the Abuses that prevail in the Church, and not to submit to that Multitude of Opinions with which our Creed is enlarged, by a continual Creation of new Articles of Faith

Faith, I shall never depart from a due Submission to those Catholick Truths, which have been transmitted to us by our Fathers, and to the Usages Consecrated by the Practice of the Church. But I shall neither be so Superstitious as to place a vain Confidence in them, nor so fond of our Observances and Ceremonies, as to believe that a Church cannot Change them, without renouncing Religion, and the glorious Title of Church of Jesus Christ.

'Tis with such Dispositions, my Lord, that I leave *France*, and that a Foreign Kingdom shall see the Spectacle of a Man calumniated and persecuted for being so bold as to assert the falsity of a Romance transformed into a History by our Prejudices ; and because notwithstanding his Adherence to the Catholick Doctrines, he cannot submit to the unintelligable Jargon of our Schools. I expect it will afford my Enemies Matter for a new Triumph, and endless Calumnies. But I shall bear them more easily than the false Submission which your Divines, my Lord, have been pleased to ascribe to me in your Instruction, because at least I shall not be suspected of concurring to Injustice. I shall endeavour to keep  
up



up every where the Character of a Religious, without being a Slave. If I depart sometimes from those Opinions, which are too easily set up for Doctrines amongst us, and if I do not fear so much as they wish I did, the Censures of which most of our Bishops are so lavish every Day, yet I shall still no less carefully adhere to Unity, and preserve an ardent Zeal for Truth, and a sincere Love for the Church.

*I have the Honour to be with the  
most profound Respect,*

*My LORD*

*Of your Eminence,*

*Paris, Jan.  
12. 1728.*

*The most Humble and most*

*Obedient Servant,*

PETER FRANCIS LE COURAYER.

